

THE ARROWHEAD

Family Readiness Group Newsletter

Vol. 18

"For the families of those deployed"

22 August, 2004

Dear Arrowhead Families and Friends,

We are now well into our 9th month here in Iraq and are beginning to look forward to seeing you all again. There is still much left to do in Mosul so that it is a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people when we leave. I am sure that you all have been following the Olympics back home and know how well the Iraqi soccer team has been doing in the Games. It is uplifting for the Iraqi people to see representatives of their country compete so successfully.

August has been eventful for the Brigade in several ways. 1-14 CAV was reunited with the Brigade back in Mosul after successfully completing their mission to provide security for convoys bringing supplies to units all across Iraq. This is the first since we all arrived in Mosul that the entire Brigade is together. I know that the soldiers of 1-14 CAV are glad to be back in Mosul where the temperature is at least a few degrees cooler than down South. We seemed to have had a slight break in temperature since I last wrote to you. It was not out of the ordinary for the temperature to be 120 degrees in late July and early August; however, it seems as though we've gotten lucky with several weeks of 105-110 degree days.

Mid-tour leave has continued to stay on track for the last few weeks and I don't have any indication that it will change. Stay in touch with the FRG and please stay patient if things suddenly change. The FRG will also let you know when to stop sending packages to your soldiers here. Please pass on any questions that you might have to MAJ Mark Landes, the Rear Detachment Commander. We look forward to coming back to Fort Lewis and thank you for your continued support.

ARROWHEAD!
Colonel Mike Rounds

1-23rd Infantry Battalion

Dear Family and Friends of the Tomahawks,

All is well with Task Force Tomahawk. The biggest news for the month of August is that our unit has assumed an important mission. The versatility and flexibility of our unit led to our selection as a force to be used throughout the theater of operations. Part of our unit made a 14-straight hour road march in our Strykers.

For the kids



Soldiers from 1-14 CAV prepare to spread some good will to the youth in Mosul, Iraq. The Soldiers handed out soccer balls donated by the Proactive Sports Gear company.

Our first two missions are already accomplished restoring control to the local government in two towns. Once again we have demonstrated the unique capabilities of this unit that could only have been accomplished by the outstanding efforts of its soldiers.

Pictured in this article is Staff Sergeant Hall checking the azimuth of a satellite radio antenna. Our wide array of communications equipment allows us to stay in contact all over the world. In the background you can see the camp's airfield, our support vehicles, and one of the bunkers that we



are staying in. The living conditions here are better than we expected - each bunker has its own air-conditioning and electricity, the soldiers are

eating well with the cooks bringing the chow to us. Most of the amenities we are used to at our FOB are here as well to include a PX, laundry service, a gym, phones and the Internet.

Leave was temporarily canceled due to the need for all available combat power in our area. However, as we have regained control of the province and things have stabilized, the leave program has been restarted. This minor adjustment was a military necessity. We have begun to fly in our mail as well, so very soon your letters will be received and read.

Our redeployment is getting closer. As it stands today, we should be home around the end of October. God bless all of you.

Respectfully,
LTC William "Buck" James

2-3rd Infantry Battalion

Dear Family, Friends, and fellow Patriots,

You will be happy to hear the last two weeks have been relatively quiet in Mosul, but they did not start out that way. I am sure you have seen some things in the press about the attacks in Mosul on 4 August. The good news is that our side of the city remained calm throughout the day, although we did send Charger Company to assist 1-23 Infantry. The Soldiers of C Company did a great job of securing one of the bridges in the city, which allowed the Tomahawks of 1-23 IN to reposition their own combat forces to deal with other threats. Given the rapidly changing nature of the mission it was a great success for us, and the fact that we were able to get our sister Battalion from the 101st Iraqi National Guard (ING) involved was even more important. The 101st actually arrived at the bridge site first and secured it while clearing the area around it, a sure sign that they will soon be ready to assume primary responsibility for security in Mosul. Overall, it may have been an exciting day on the news, but for our Soldiers it was business as usual as they delivered another professional and competent performance, accomplishing every mission they were given.

I attribute the current calm we are experiencing to the great job your Soldiers are doing. We continue to focus on training the Iraqi National Guard and are getting ready to graduate the last company from the training we are sponsoring for them. In the meantime, we remain committed to the security of Mosul and continue our daily missions in support of that goal.

The Legionnaires of A Company and the Blackhorse soldiers from B Company continue to do a great job of providing force protection around the

camp. It is hot work and the hours are long, but their continued presence in the area continues to prevent the Anti Iraqi Forces (AIF) from shooting mortars and rockets at the base. There is also distinct evidence now that some of the raids we did last month seriously disrupted an AIF cell that was



emplacing
Improvised
Explosive
Devices on the
roads in our area
as that activity
has almost
disappeared
following the
detention of the

individuals we thought were involved.

Charger Company spends a little more time roaming the battlefield in search of missions as we try to employ them where their effect is needed. Their primary focus continues to be preventing the enemy from firing rockets at our bases, which have also seen a decrease in these types of attacks due to the hard work that the C Company Soldiers are doing.



We rotate all of the companies into the mix for providing security for our Civil Affairs team as they roll through the surrounding towns checking

up on the projects that they are managing. There are no new projects to report complete this week, but they have been aggressively filling in the requests needed to secure funds for more work and received another \$150,000 to cover water, sewage, and improvements to police stations this week.

In support of what we consider our most important work, we have been building the infrastructure needed to train, house, and sustain the 101st battalion ING. That has been an enormous project spearheaded by CPT Slosman from the Battalion Operations Shop and SFC (P) Allison. We are lucky to have an Engineer Platoon in support of that mission and SFC Armes and 1LT Williams-Fernandez from 3rd Platoon, B Company, 276th Engineers have reshaped the ING facilities at Al Kindi into a functional base that looks 100% better than when they started. The work completed there

has included building three ranges, a shoot house they can practice room clearing in, improving the drainage, and refurbishing barracks and support facilities for the entire Battalion. It is hard to explain the scope of the project, but try to imagine building a small college campus and it will give you an idea of the work required. Our Soldiers have done a great job managing and executing this project and it will have a definite impact on the security of Iraq for years to come.

Despite all of the work that we have to do every day we also take some time to make sure we are training on the skills that are critical to accomplishing our mission and keeping our Soldiers safe. Most recently we had the chance to go to Saber Range and fire all of the weapon systems on our Strykers. All of our crews confirmed their zero and made sure their Remote Weapon Systems (RWS) were working properly as they fired their M-2 .50 caliber machine guns and Mark 19 Automatic Grenade Launchers. Our Anti-Tank Guided Missile crews were also able to test fire their TOW missiles, which is always fun to watch. It



was great training and you can rest assured that our Soldiers remain ready and able to use every weapon system assigned to accomplish their mission.

Another indicator of the great job our Soldiers are doing came when Sergeant Major of the Army Preston visited the Battalion this last week. Soldiers from C Company and HHC participated in the equipment demonstrations and SMA Preston told us he was impressed. I credit the excellent job that your Soldiers did during the visit by CSM Gainey of MNC-I was so impressed that he brought SMA Preston here to see us as well. Great job to all of the Soldiers involved in the demonstrations and to all of the Soldiers on patrol that ensured our security while hosting SMA Preston.

Thank you all for your continued support. The days here are not easy, and we know the days at home without us are no better, but your prayers, support, letters, and the calls we get to make home help us keep at it every day.

Jay G. Flowers
"PATRIOTS"

5-20th Infantry Battalion

Dear wives and family members of the Sykes' Regulars,

The last two weeks have been very busy for the men and women of the Sykes Regulars. Recently the battalion concluded a major operation in our area of operations that started with a Brigade coordinated attack on Tall Afar, Iraq and ended with the conduct of several raids against high value targets in the area. The operation was a sweeping success in part because of the cooperation of the 102nd ING Battalion as well as Brigade dedicated assets that aided in targeting terrorists. Additionally, we recently added an ING company to our task organization allowing us more flexibility and capabilities in combating terrorists in the area.

Battle Company

As Battle company goes under a hundred days to our homecoming, we are all looking to the future and eagerly awaiting our return to the United States. We continue to be busy here with numerous operations and contending with the heat. Leave is continuing and we will make every effort to get as many people home for leave as possible. As summer begins to draw to a close and the kids back home begin to prepare for school, we look forward to cooler temperatures that are hopefully not far in our future. As always we miss all of you back home and look forward to our return in the fall. As we come to the end of another month, we get one step closer to returning home to family and friends. The men of Battle Company continue to perform superbly in Northern Iraq. The operational tempo remains high here and Battle Company continues to do our part in ridding the country of terrorists. All of you at home have a tremendous amount to be proud of for the contributions and effort your loved ones have made here. While remaining focused on the mission at hand, we are beginning preparations for the arrival of 1st Brigade and our up coming hand over to them. While weary from a long year in country the energy can be felt in the air as we look forward to our relief arriving and returning home.

The Rock

This week Rock Company was focused on the Brigade level operations going on in Northwestern Iraq. The missions that Rock was involved in over the past week constitute the largest cooperative operation between US and Iraqi National Guard Forces, to date, in the northwest Ninevah Province. The soldiers performed brilliantly on the back-to-back 10-hour missions. Despite punishing factors of heat well in excess of 110 degrees, very little food, and inadequate sleep, Rock soldiers once again proved their mental and physical toughness. The net effect of the operation is yet to be seen, but the soldiers of Rock detained many individuals and confiscated many pieces of enemy equipment. Rock's efforts in conjunction with the rest of the battalion have kept the enemy off balance and degraded his ability to conduct attacks in this sector.

Additionally, Rock soldiers conducted two air assault raids on suspected terrorist hideouts along the Syrian border. To my knowledge, this is the first known air assault of any unit within the Stryker Brigade since its inception two years ago. The



first air assault mission was a complete success with the Rock capturing an individual we had been after for a long time. The second mission was more of the same, capturing three bonafide bad guys. All told, the Rock succeeded in depleting the enemy's combat power a great deal this week.

Over the past two months, the MGS and Mortar Platoons have racked up thousands of miles on their Strykers. They have been the primary security element for logistical moves for the Battalion. They are also responsible for conducting daily IED sweeps along roads throughout the Area of Operation. Their steadfast courage in the face of imminent enemy contact has made re-supply of this installation possible.

Last week, the Rock had another great success. The company conducted a raid against terrorist leaders inside Tall A'far. These are the men conducting attacks against the coalition and others. The mission was a complete success with the detainment of four terrorist leaders. The soldiers of

The Rock succeeded in degrading the enemy's ability to command and control, ultimately making this a safer area.

The Rock would like to recognize the soldiers that re-enlisted in the Army this week. After being in combat for over 9 months and enduring the stressors associated with a long deployment, these mentally tough individuals have decided they want to continue their service to the nation. The Rock would like to commend SSG Darrell Joe, SGT Matthew Sagabean, and SPC Joshua Blankenship for their honorable decision.

Hound

Another Hound Family greeting from the sands of Iraq. Operations have certainly kept the Hound family busy. In the past weeks, the FOB has begun to take on a different look. With the arrival of an Iraqi National Guard Company being the highlight of the week, many soldiers are beginning to work hand in hand with the new force. Preparations have begun, to expand on the FOB as we anticipate the arrival of 1-24 IN. Each section has been working diligently to inventory and re-supply shortages of equipment. Simultaneously the force is working through the Combat Recovery Team (CRT) to conduct yearly services and regular maintenance to get the Hound fleet prepared for adoption by 1-24 IN. As we continue to make our mark in "Sykes' Regulars" history, many soldiers have reenlisted in the past year. The Company is well above our mark for reenlistments this year. Whether it is the combat bonus, or tax-free option that has persuaded many to continue in their Army careers, a majority reenlisted to stay in the Battalion, the unit in which the fine soldiers of the Hound family have adopted as their own. A warm wish is sent out to the families of the Hound soldiers for their continued and unwavering support.

Although the separation has been difficult to all, your support has made it feasible for the soldiers to do what they do best, fight and defend our way of life and freedom. Thank you. As the sun rises and sets, so passes another day in Iraq, one day closer to the reuniting of the Hound Family with their families. Take care to all, and God Bless.

Thunder Platoon

Greetings Thunder family, it is now August and we are only several short months away from reuniting with our loved ones. We finally acclimatized to the searing desert heat, but, on the downside, when it drops below ninety degrees at night, we get cold. Everyone in the platoon has been busy, but not as busy as a couple months ago when we were down

south. We have a new addition in the Thunder family. SPC Williams came over from support platoon last month and has been integrated into third squad. In addition, SPC Williams became the proud father of a beautiful baby boy just last month. We wish you all well and we cannot wait to see you in a couple months.

Support Platoon

Here it is August, just a few more months until were back to the Northwest and our loved ones. During the last few months, we have had a few new homes, each one getting a little nicer. We now have a home complete with a Host Nation Mall with 12 shops, 3 barbers, and 2 Internet centers with phones. The building we work out of has four A/C units, which are great in this 120-plus degree weather we are having. We will never complain about the clouds and the rain of FT. Lewis again (well maybe). We are all looking forward to our redeployment so we can help with the households that you have all been doing an outstanding and appreciated job at.

Medical Platoon

The Medics continue to drive on through the heat and dust. Training keeps them busy throughout the summer while they enjoy the opportunities to learn and advance their knowledge base. Many enjoy the respite and break that mid-tour leave provides. SPC Kelley sums it up best, "I try to focus on the time here as an enriching opportunity, a chance to hone our skills in the medical arena while we can bond and grow as a team. It is an exiting time, and I go on leave in 3 days too!"

BSMC

Operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom have illustrated a battlefield that is non-linear, an enemy who is non-conventional, and a battle space that is non-doctrinal. Consequently, the Brigade Support Medical Company is challenged daily with the task of implementing innovative methods to provide far forward, quality care. Last week, after 5-20 Infantry Battalion executed a number of coordinated missions to root out Anti-Iraqi Forces, including one with a new Iraqi National Guard Battalion, the Brigade Support Medical Company and the 5-20 Infantry Medical Platoon were called to duty with a new challenge. Because of high temperatures, long hours, few water-cooling capabilities, and soldiers refusing to drink hot water, the Iraqi National Guard incurred numerous heat casualties, flooding the BSMC's Treatment and Patient Hold areas. The incident required every soldier and leader in the Company to participate in

heat mitigation and fluid availability. Providers and medics gave IVs, monitored temperatures, and assessed the severity of heat injuries, while non-medical personnel set up numerous fans, coordinated for the installation of additional A/C units, prepared IV starter kits, and mixed iced Gatorade. After evacuating four heat casualties to the combat support hospital, the BSMC returned the majority of their patients to duty in time to join their unit for movement to their next mission. The day was a success for both the maneuver units and the medical community who support them.

Preventive Medicine Section

In today's Army, despite the advanced technology of communication and weapons systems, the key to success throughout the battle space still lies in the performance capabilities of the American soldier. Every day, the medical community strives to conserve the fighting strength of the forces they support. Imperative to maintaining a "fit to fight" force is the Preventive Medicine Section. The mission of Preventive Medicine is to conduct environmental health surveillance, inspection, and consultation services for the Brigade. Essentially, this section is tasked to proactively protect soldiers from disease, illness, and sickness caused by poor sanitation, bugs, animals and other vectors. Preventive Medicine (PM) has successfully executed their mission throughout the deployment by conducting regularly scheduled inspections of the dining facilities, water sources, including bottled water and shower water, and the local national cafes currently residing on the forward operating bases that so many of the soldiers enjoy on a daily basis. In addition, PM ensures that both living and work areas are free of rodents and other pests. To the dismay of some, PM enforces a strict no pets and no mascots policy. As a result of their efforts, the soldiers of 5-20 Infantry Battalion, regardless of their location or environment during their numerous moves this year, are "fit to fight."

D Troop/1-14 CAV

Only on deployments can you see your CO (CPT Bauchspies) coming from the showers in just a green towel and brown t-shirt. Only here will you see a water / Gatoraid/ tea fountain sitting out side of SGT Waters and SGT Johnson's patio dubbed "The Redneck Porch". No matter what you do or where you go there is dirt and more dirt. If you need a change of scenery, you can stop by LT Indyk's hooch and see his attempt of growing plants, flowers, or something (probably mold). D TRP soldiers, in general, spend their down time watching movies. When SPC Bullivant found out that PFC

Cabral has never seen "The Dirty Dozen". We wondered how he could be in the army without having seen that movie. SSG Paine bought the movie for his soldier and had a mandatory study hall for PFC Cabral that included watching "The Dirty Dozen and The Magnificent Seven. The next day Cabral was picked to be the front man as the Troop Guide On bearer for the change of command ceremony and now is more careful about saying which movies he hasn't seen. After long hot days of doing various missions we can always look forward to waking up for PT every morning and listen to the 1SG and SSG Paine compete in any and everything. It is funny listening to 1SG call SSG Paine slow on the runs knowing SSG Paine cannot run for obvious reasons. On Thursdays, we play sports and it is safe to say it is the ONLY time we can get a grin from our XO. Only when his team is winning I might add. For those of you from the south, they actually had fried chicken, mustard greens, sweet potatoes, fried catfish, and baked macaroni and cheese in the dining facility the other day. We have not eaten that well in about 9 months. SSG Paine and his friends, SSG Tate and SGT Christitian sometimes get to watch videos of family like his daughter taking her first steps. He saw her one-week after she was born before he was deployed and we are going to celebrate her first Birthday this month together with him. We all pull together to support each other in times like these. When things got a little boring SPC Davis started a video tournament with other soldiers playing "Halo" with all their XBOX's hooked up to each other. If all else fails, we can go to the gym and lift weights with SPC Blackwell or SPC Davis. For those that do not lift weights, they can always go join SSG Gains at the basketball court every evening. Last week, D Troop conducted the Change of Command ceremony on the basketball court in the 5-20 Infantry battalion area. CPT Bauchspies received his command guidon as a farewell gift from the Troop, and we officially welcomed CPT Wilkinson and his wife to D Troop.

The NBC Platoon has resumed its operations, acting as convoy security and providing protection for our soldiers and equipment as they travel between here and wherever the convoys need to go. 1LT Indyk received the Purple Heart for injuries he received during an attack back in June, but thankfully his injuries were not too serious and he only needed some minor medical attention. In the Multi-Sensor Platoon, the Prophet section continues to provide valuable intelligence and enhance the Infantry's combat operations in the area. The MASINT section of Multi-Sensor Platoon still

provides the blanket of security that lets the rest of us sleep safe at night by manning the base security guard points to detect any enemy that target us, civilians, or Iraqi forces. Recently, the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Platoon broke the 1600 flight hour barrier for the deployment, setting the record for most flight time of any UAV Platoon during Operation Iraqi Freedom. We wish to congratulate the following UAV platoon personnel: SSG VanDyke, SGT Trogdon, SPC Allemang, and SPC McIntosh. These soldiers all choose to re-enlist for unit stabilization with the UAV platoon and will continue their service to the Army in the Stryker Brigade. We wish to thank the family members and friends of Delta Troop, who continue to keep us in their thoughts, prayers, and on their mailing list. It is your support that keeps our spirits high through the difficulties of being away from home for so long. We will see you all soon.

It has been an extremely busy past few weeks for the Regulars and for our attachments operating in the northwest Ninevah Province. The soldiers have been very busy taking the fight to the enemy and not allowing him time to relax and regroup. The battalion remains successful and every mission we conduct adds to our outstanding battle history during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Another month is gone and we continue to creep closer and closer to coming home to our loved ones. Recently, the Brigade published the long-range training calendar. The long-range training calendar was careful to allow maximum family time and has many non-workdays built into the schedule. Block leave will last from 4 December to 4 January so that families will have a lot of time to get reacquainted with each other over the holidays. A, B, and C Companies will all change commanders before we depart for block leave and we will undergo a reset period following block leave where soldiers who were stop-loss will be afforded the opportunity to continue with their previous plans. For those of us staying in, the next year will be a great one, in part because we will be home and because so many great soldiers decided to remain with the unit. We will have a core of battle-hardened officers and enlisted soldiers whose experiences over the course of the last year will serve the unit well in preparation and training events.

LTC Karl D. Reed

1-14th Cavalry Squadron

Dear Family and Friends of the WARHORSE Squadron,

The Squadron continues to perform brilliantly in whatever mission we are asked to accomplish. Recently, elements of the Squadron have been conducting operations in Mosul, the capital city of Nineveh Province. Mosul has a population around 2 million and is bisected by the Tigris River. The city



of Mosul is of vital importance to the region and to northern Iraq. We are working daily with the Iraqi National Guard (ING), designed to fill the gap between local police and the Iraqi

Armed Forces. We are also continuing our operations on the Syrian border. It is a full plate of missions, but the soldiers and leaders are ready. I'm impressed daily by the dedication and professionalism of every trooper in this unit.

We've begun planning our return home! As we get more of the details, it will be sent to the FRG leadership. The advanced party for 2-14 CAV will be arriving around a month from now. Everyone is looking forward to the day when we can return home to our loved ones. But for now, we continue to focus on the mission at hand: defeating terrorist, training and resourcing Iraqi Security Forces, and assisting in improving the Iraqi infrastructure.

Our mailing address has not changed this time. As always, your letters, packages, e-mails and prayers continue to lift everyone's spirits. The temperatures are starting to cool, with the daily highs forecasted to be below 110 degrees in the days ahead. We'll take any "cooler" weather we can get.

Thanks to everyone for their outstanding support of the Squadron during this challenging deployment. We appreciate your encouragement and your prayers and we look forward to providing more details for our redeployment soon.

LTC Buddy Carman

Horsemen

Dear families and friends of the Horsemen,

We would like to thank all of you for the continued support you have given us during our time in Iraq.

The letters and packages that you continue to send mean so much to each and every one of us. With all the moving around the Squadron has been doing, there are always a few anxious days till the flow of mail begins again. Thank you all for your continued support, it has really been fantastic.

The Horsemen continue to do an outstanding job of supporting the squadron thru the continuing changes in mission and location. On a daily basis the soldiers are involved in a multitude of missions supporting the line troops or improving the quality of life no matter where we are or how many times we move. From each FOB, the troopers of Horsemen constantly work hard to provide needed support for the mission. They continue to maintain their positive attitudes and the willingness to get the job done.

As you may or may not know, the FRG leadership has had a change of its own in preparation for our redeployment. Chaplain Shoffner has been promoted to Major, and following this deployment he will become the BDE Chaplain. In anticipation of this change, Mrs. Shoffner has taken an advisory roll in the FRG leadership and Mrs. Wilson has taken her place as a co-leader. I would personally like to thank Mrs. Shoffner for all the time and effort she had put in to the Horsemen FRG program. She has been a driving force for the FRG from the beginning and has really helped to make the program a success. Mrs. Wilson is coming in well recommended by Mrs. Shoffner as a person who can continue to build the FRG and help see it thru the rest of this deployment and into all future operations the Squadron will be involved in.

Finally, I would like to thank you for all you do to support us and keep us strong from the home front. Take care and God bless.

CPT Mike Christiansen

Apocalypse

Dear Friends and Family of A Troop,

Well, we have marked the 10th month since leaving the green trees of Washington. Recent events have led A Troop back to Northern Iraq, to our old stomping grounds near the western border and the surrounding area. It was nice to get back north, where a 10° drop in temperature makes a world of difference. Believe it or not there is a difference between 120° and 110°. Morale is still high, especially now that we can see light at the

end of the tunnel. Hopefully, in a matter of a few months, we will all be reunited back home.

Besides moving back North, the most significant event that has occurred in the last month was A Troop's mission of escorting the South Korean Army through Iraq. Everyone worked especially hard to ensure the Korean soldiers' safe passage. The Troop leadership was extremely proud of all the hard work the soldiers did. Right now, of the soldiers that deployed with the Troop in November, 97% will have the opportunity to take leave and get some well earned rest. Our ultimate goal is for everyone to take leave.

It is hard to believe we have been apart for so long, but staying busy makes the time go by fast. It's one thing that the Army never seems to run out of - tasks to keep us busy and our minds focused on the job. Everyone here wants you to know that we realize the sacrifices that you have made. We will never forget it and will remain forever thankful that we have such wonderful friends and family. Keep the mail coming and before long we will be back home.

Troopers of Apocalypse

Bronco

Dear Bronco Troop Friends and Family,

For this edition of the letter, we wanted to hear from a few junior NCOs, and provide another perspective on our activities as of late. As always, the soldiers of B Troop provide a lucid and genuine description of the life of our soldiers. Once again, I could not be more proud to be associated with so many great soldiers.

CPT Matthew Blome

Dear Bronco Troop Friends and Family,

The order to make our move back to our old FOB came one day before a back-to-back convoy escort mission. We left for the old FOB at 0830 in the morning; the move was to only take about 8 hours, but as soon as we got out of the gate our convoy started to have problems. First there was a break down of another convoy's Stryker so we had to stop and help recover that vehicle, but while we were making our move forward to the location of the broken down Stryker one of our own Strykers blew a turbo. So there we were, no more than 8 miles from start point and already we have 2

Strykers down. An hour later we finally have the 2 Strykers hitched up and ready to move, no more than 10 minutes later a Humvee in our convoy goes down. Not only is this starting to be funny, but also we all are getting a little annoyed because we were starting to run out of recovery assets. Four hours into our move we have only made it 12 miles down the road, unfortunately our planned 8-hour road trip turned into 13 hours and 20 min.

On completion of the move, we wasted no time in starting our mission that we were called back to do. Run the Northern border of Iraq and Syria. Our main goal was to stop terrorists coming into Iraq from Syria. The days were long and very hot, not once did we come back without putting in over 12 hours of fun in the sun. Yes, granted it was kind of boring stopping at every site smugglers could cross, but then again there's not much stopping them from crossing the border, so you could say that the entire length of the border was a crossing point. Needless to say we had a little fun, we could test the Strykers vertical limits, made friends with farmers, and bought watermelons, cucumbers, and tomatoes from them, those things were an added plus, because now we did not have to eat any MREs, which we all have had our fill of. We were all finally accepting that this was going to be our last move and all we had to do was sit on the border, arrest terrorists and wait to be relieved so that we may come home and tell you about all the hard work, time, and sweat that we had put into our mission on the border.

Not 10 days after returning to our FOB we were called away once again, never knowing if there is really going to be a home for us, or what is around the next corner. All I know is that we all cannot wait to come home to our loved ones, and to know that what we have done here has helped in some way. But then all you have to do is take a look into the eyes of the children of all of the villages that we have visited and driven by. That tells us all one thing - it's worth it.

SGT Harvey Stewart

Dear Bronco Troop Friends and Family,

We got the word that we would be moving back to the FOB from our previous mission. This news was met with a great sigh of relief from the group. We would now be back with our friends from other units and a structure that made more sense to us.

So we set off again on our trek across the country, seeing the site and locations we had been before. It brought back some of the days that

seemed so long ago, but were really 8 months ago. The temperature was a standard 100 degrees or so, but we are use to that by now.

We arrived in the evening, ready to see what the infantry battalion that now occupied the FOB had changed there in order to suit their needs. We were surprised to find out the only changes were one building was painted blue and our sign was covered by a paint plywood sign. We then took all our personal belonging from the Strykers and put them in our rooms, preparing for the next mission. The following day we found our old translators, Majow, Ish, and some other familiar faces translating for us. Both the unit and our translators were glad to be working together once again in the same area.

The next couple of days were spent doing inspections on the local government agencies to ensure things were as we left them, and to get an idea of what might be needed to help them do their jobs better. We also helped out the Iraqi border patrol in the evenings by monitoring the border with them in order to catch the occasional Syrian sheep or donkey that didn't bring his ID (those rascally animals).

The town of Rabiah was met with mixed emotions, whether it would be glad to see us return or upset that we left. Upon our return, we learned for them it was business as usual, regardless of whether we were there or not. No one seemed displeased that we left, nor ecstatic that we were back. I guess you could say it was a good thing, better then being hated.

Yet again the story takes a turn away from Rabiah, this time to Mosul. It seems to us, as of late, that our infantry friends can't do anything without our help. So we pack up shop and head to Mosul where we find an even better life is waiting for us. Here we are given more time to take care of equipment and personal needs as well as having prime real estate for housing, right in the middle of all the off time attractions on post. All the support assets are a lot closer, so we can get mail out quicker, or get money when it is needed rather than waiting once a month for the finance personnel to "dare the open road."

The country as a whole is rich in more ways than one. It has a long history, dating all the way back to when things were first written in Sanskrit, found in Samaria (which was later warped into the name Samarra, a name that many of the soldiers here know all too well). Now we stay in a place that was once known as Nineva, which sounds familiar doesn't it. Most of the country still does things the way they did it thousands of years ago, but this time with a white Toyota in the front yard.

It is also rich in the odor that lingers in the air. It is distinct and hard to describe, but if I had to, it's a cross between a port-a-potty, refuse, and burnt grass making the air thick. It's a little uneasy to think that the warmth and thickness of the air might just be the humidity and temperature or it might be Baba Gaduesh's bathroom. As it is said, "ignorance is bliss."

The closer we get to the one year mark, the more our minds are drifting to home and being with our loved ones again, and it is a difficult thing for most, because we still have to accomplish the great task at hand. If there is one thing I can tell all the wives and loved ones back home are to keep your spouses focused on where they are. It keeps them out of trouble and harm's way. When we get home, we can all celebrate our return and safe journey.

SGT Neal Baker

Crazy Horse

Hello from Mosul to all Crazy Horse FRG members. Yes, you read correctly we are in Mosul. If it seems to you as if over the last month Crazy Horse and the Squadron have moved more than the Allied Moving Company, you are not alone. From Qayyarah to Balad; from Balad to Tall Afar to the Syrian border to Mosul. We have been there.

As we rolled into our new "home" we found the digs not to be that bad. The Iraqi Border Guards were very helpful and happy to have the unit

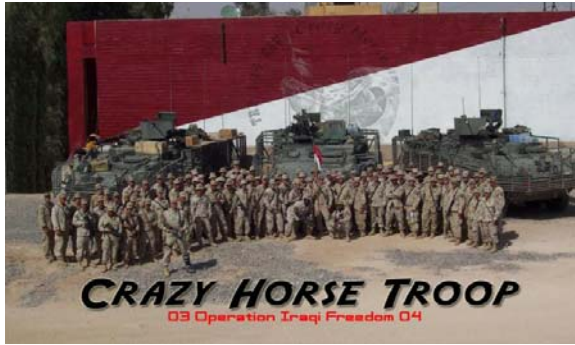


around. For several days we conducted joint border operations with the Iraqis only several hundred meters away from Syria and slightly more from the Syrian

Army. Such integration assisted in the development of friendships as witnessed by the picture of 1SG Crisp and a couple of his new buddies.

Just when we got into a groove, we were sent to Mosul. It was difficult and somewhat unnerving, but it is the life of the Cav to be able to move frequently and quickly. So we did. You would have been proud of your husbands. The next time you PCS and are having a hard time packing your belongings, just know that your loved one has become quite efficient at space-saving and packing.

The move to Mosul afforded the unit an opportunity to see yet another location in our tour of Iraq that



we call the Crazy Horse OIF Tour of 2004. The congested urban environment of Mosul was quite different than most of our areas of operations previously and the guys had to get used to driving the Strykers down tiny roads with cars on either side.

As the time passes and the Troop gets closer to heading home it is easy to see the spirits of the guys picking up. They know there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Even so they must remain focused on our mission. Just know that your loved one is doing great things for his country and loved ones. Until we talk again be safe and take care.

CPT Jordan

Avalanche

Greetings Avalanche family and friends. I want to take this moment to say hello to the entire Avalanche family. In this short time I have seen many great things done by both the Avalanche soldiers and the family members as well. The wives have welcomed my wife into the family with open arms. Thank you for your many kind words and support. This month we have reenlisted many fine soldiers. Many of these soldiers wanted to keep low profiles. However, there is nothing I enjoy more than retaining a soldier within the army. It shows commitment not to the army but to you family members as together you are both looking at the future. It has truly been a great time so far.

In my short time in command here, I have seen some extraordinary accomplishments by all the Avalanche soldiers. We continue to train the Iraqi soldiers in preparation for Iraq to sustain itself. And in fact, we have already seen some great results from Iraqi soldiers that your soldiers specifically trained. Your soldiers are being recognized at the highest levels for the effort and quality that they are displaying and producing in the Iraqi soldier. In fact your soldiers have such a great job that they are being asked to continue this effort

yet again. It is a true testament to your soldiers. I have seen great things across the board. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the soldiers for the work they put into the Change of Command under very difficult circumstances. Thank you for your hard work.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to talk to and about a few soldiers not often recognized. The people behind the scenes that are critical to accomplishment. People like SGT Green, our communications expert. Anyone who knows communication equipment knows how confusing it can be. The job he did to explain what each piece of equipment was during the Change of Command inventories made my life much easier. "My job is to ensure that all our communications equipment works so that everyone can talk to each other." He explained. "I'm just here to do my job." Quite an understatement, I can assure you. Without our communication, we absolutely cannot function. He has done a tremendous job in keeping our communication up and running.

Along with communication is the important supply and logistics. Napoleon once said an army functions on its stomach. What he meant by that is without supplies an army cannot get far at all. This job falls to my two Supply sergeants SGT Cook and SGT Lopez. I have a great deal to learn about the supply side of command but I feel confident that with these two fine NCOs at the helm, we will work through it quickly. I asked SGT Cook what his most memorable experience was over the past few weeks. His answer surprised me although in retrospect it shouldn't have. "I was impressed how smoothly the change of command went." He said. "The company only had a few days to accomplish



what normally takes a month. And we made it work." This is yet another demonstration of the cohesion found within the Avalanche family.

In sitting down with SGT Lopez who along with SGT Cook prepared all the documents necessary to account for all the company equipment I was stunned again. "I'm still learning" SGT Lopez said. I am grateful to have these two NCOs working for me.

One of my biggest concerns is the medical status of the company. I am extremely happy with the company's emphasis on medical training and readiness. Between SGT Luther, SPC Fullwood, SPC Cruc, and SPC Hartshore your soldiers are in very good hands. God forbid something ever happen to your soldiers but rest assured that if it does these medics are prepared to take care of them. They have also prepared the rest of the company as well. "We have worked on Combat Life Saver training (medical training for the individual soldier) and practice (first aid) with the soldiers." SPC Fullwood told me. I have seen first hand these medics administer first aid to the ING soldiers and I can see why your soldiers have such a good safety record. SGT Luther summed it all up for me, "I just want to make sure everyone comes back home safely."

Due to the small, close-knit nature of this company, it becomes necessary to wear many hats. SSG Tripp is one of these soldiers who epitomizes that. While working as a lead trainer of an ING platoon, he also holds the extremely important position of company armorer. Aside from making me feel personally safe as my gunner, he also keeps the company safe with his hard work in maintaining the weapons within the company. "I like working with the soldiers to make sure their equipment works." He told me. "It is a really good feeling to see a soldier come away with not only a working weapon but a better understanding of it as well." Well I can tell you it is a really good feeling to have SSG Tripp as part of this great team.

Believe me when I tell you this. These soldiers are not the alone in their effort in support of this company. The dedication to mission and each other is something that is consistent through the entire company. As we move forward, I can only hope to continue this great tradition of the Avalanche spirit. And really it is easy. All I need remember is to follow the fine examples set by your soldiers. They are showing me that being part of the Avalanche team is a great thing indeed.

"COLD THUNDER"

CPT Arieveh J. Austin

Chaplain's Corner

"I See a Light"

My spouse, myself, and several other soldiers and spouses I have spoken to recently have begun speaking of a strange light that they are beginning

to see on the horizon, or more appropriately at the end of a long tunnel. What has been interesting are the feelings that this light seems to be unleashing. Anxiousness, although most of the waiting is over, it seems like now is when we feel the anxiousness most keenly. It reminds me of when we were kids and we would play hide and seek. The closer the person came to where you were, the more intense that nervous anticipation would become. As the time begins to wind down, anticipation will continue to increase. This can be both a positive and a negative thing. The negative side is that we all must keep our focus on where we are. There are still kids to take care of, jobs, school on the horizon, and numerous other tasks that must keep going. For soldiers, we must keep our focus on the situation at-hand, to allow our attention to wander can have very bad consequences in this environment. Maintaining focus is a must for us all. However, there is also a positive side. This type of excitement can be a great catalyst for drawing us back together. Until we get home, and even for some time after, you will hear the word Re-Integration a great deal. The upside of this energy is that if we can channel it in the right direction, it can become an excellent fuel for Re-Integration. So, I wanted to take just a few lines to begin to introduce some of themes of Re-Integration. As you and your spouse talk over the next weeks/months, capitalize on the growing energy to begin to build towards a smooth and healthy Re-Union. As always, the first point is communication. The experts tell us that Communication and Conflict Resolution are key elements in strong relationships. This will be doubly true during Re-Integration. Communicate about what? Well, one place that is always a good starting point, is the basics. Just as earlier we talked about two phrases you can never go wrong with (I Love You, and I'm Sorry), re-visiting the basic building blocks of your relationship is always a good place to start. Share your love for each other. Talk about the things that you find attractive about your spouse. Talk about the future. A strong and realistic Plan is a very important part of Re-Integration. What are we going to do when we get home? My wife and I have special things planned for most of the major aspects of our lives. We have a big event planned with the kids around pumpkin carving, candy gathering, and attending a huge party our Church throws every year. We have a romantic weekend away with just the two of us. We are looking forward to the Squadron Ball to reconnect with all our friends in the Unit. And we have events at home and church as well. Eventually we will head to California to spend time with our families, and then hopefully off to Hawaii

for a family vacation. Now, you may not think any of that sounds like fun, but what I hope it illustrates is that we have a plan. Plans include large scale and small scale events. Meeting each other for lunch and picking up the kids from school, all the way to trips to Hawaii. It is all part of our plan to Re-Connect. Your plan will be totally different, but have a plan that is long on time together and allows you to re-establish those basic connections, spouse, children, family, and friends. Next month we will talk about some other aspects of Reunion, but for now, communicate, plan, and capitalize on the expectant energy. God Bless.

CH Dave Shoffner

3-17th Cavalry Squadron

A MAINTAINER'S HOBBY

As the hot weather continues, there's only one 'sport' where it's worth it to brave the afternoon sun, and that's Remote Controlled (RC) Car Racing. A new thing to most soldiers in the task force and the troop, it's a great way to pass time, and a lot more than just pressing the 'go' button. With the newest technology, these cars and trucks are amazing micro machines with all the bells and whistles of 'real' vehicles and some other capabilities that are even better.

Working entirely through the internet and mail order companies, nine D Troop soldiers purchased an RC car or truck, parts, and upgrades, making RC'ing



the unofficial troop sport. Some troopers say it's the next best thing to working on cars in the garage back home. For those of us who remember the first generation of RC vehicles from Radio Shack, these new trucks might make you feel a little bit old. They come complete with most of the components of contemporary cars including differentials, hydraulics, multi-gear transmissions, air filters, and carburetors. Some come with bonuses like four-wheel drive and special off-road shocks.

Along with operating like 'real' cars, they require 'real' maintenance too. Though from the outside, it looks like a lot more maintenance than one might like, especially when you've been fixing helicopters

all day, soldiers say that's part of the fun. RC owners truly enjoy mail call, as they receive the parts and upgrades they've been waiting for, taking the time that night to get their vehicle back up in 'fully mission capable' status. In fact, sometimes the troop aircraft maintenance hangar looks like a miniature auto shop, where you'll find guys cleaning air filters, adjusting their fuel/air mixture, replacing a transmission gear or re-painting their vehicle. The troop first sergeant, 1SG Jaime Aburto explains that maintaining, cleaning, and racing the RC vehicles is actually a therapeutic hobby, perfect for the deployment conditions.

For an extra challenge, SFC Hamaker, the troop's Maintenance Platoon Sergeant, lead the charge on building a troop RC track, where you can regularly see D Troop soldiers taking their trucks on a nightly



run. You might be hesitant to take your real car out on that kind of track, but for the RC vehicles, it's a risk-free venture. The goals range from the highest

jump, to the quickest time, to the craziest stunts... and it doesn't hurt nearly as much or cost quite as much when it wrecks. So, if you hear the high-pitched whine of a small gas engine around the corner, stop by and check out the D Troop races...unless of course, the maintenance status of our RC vehicles is better than the aircraft, and then you'll find us turning wrenches into the evening.

REDHORSE ROUNDUP

As the days and weeks fly by, the soldiers, NCOs and officers in the multitude of staff sections that compose Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Task Force 3-17 CAV continue to drive on, accomplishing the myriad of small but essential routine tasks that keep the Task Force running on a daily basis.

One of the busiest groups has been the Task Force Scout Platoon. Almost every night, the Wolverines, led by Platoon Leader 1LT Choate and Platoon Sergeant SFC Bowman, climb into their up-armored Humvees and head out of the front gate at Qayyarah West Airfield, patrolling the area surrounding the base and keeping a sharp eye out for any signs of enemy activity.

Of course, this regular patrol schedule keeps not only the scouts, but also plenty of other Redhorse troopers, on their toes. The Maintenance Section is at the forefront of the supporting effort, as mechanics work tirelessly to service the scouts' vehicles and repair any of the many problems that surface after hours of driving through rugged terrain. Signal Specialists from the Communications Section keep the Wolverines' radios up and running, and troubleshoot their satellite navigation and tracking systems to ensure that the scouts can



find their way through the northern Iraqi night. Back in the Tactical Operations Center, the Battle Captain, Battle NCO and Radiotelephone Operators monitor the action on the ground, keep the Task Force commander informed and direct the scouts around the battlefield.

Of course, all work and no play would make for a dull time in Iraq. As they gear up for the next Task Force Organizational Day, scheduled for September 3rd, the Redhorse Troopers occasionally take a break from the daily grind to mix it up on the fields of friendly strife. The post intramural basketball league is winding down, and HHT's Ruff Ryders finished with a win, as SPC Martinez continued to shine as the team's leading scorer. HHT also organized a flag football game last Friday in preparation for the highly anticipated officer-enlisted showdown during Organizational Day. Finally, the troop's softball team is taking no chances, practicing three times a week in the hopes of sweeping the field and claiming the Task Force Crown.

Throughout it all, the men and women of HHT are working hard and getting the job done, and playing just as hard to pass the time and keep stress at bay.

1-37 Field Artillery Battalion

Greetings to the "On the Minute" families! Another two weeks have quickly passed as we near the end of August. We hope your summer is going well. For those of you with children, "back to school" sales must have you scrambling to find all the right supplies for the school year. It also

means that your kids are trying to squeeze every bit of sunshine out of their last days of summer. Please continue to have a pleasant and safe last few weeks of summer.

Life on the FOB has been going well. Amazingly, the heat has subsided - a little. Over the last two weeks, the temperature has dipped down below 110 degrees! We can actually feel a difference. However, we haven't had to reach for our cold weather gear yet. Although the temperature nears the double digits, we all still anxiously await the grand opening of the new pool. After the final inspection, we all should be enjoying our nights at the pool after long days on the road under the sun. The Mayor of the FOB, CPT Ian Gallagher, is also working hard to refurbish old Iraqi air hangars so that we can turn them into suitable living quarters. The Mayor's Cell employs Iraqi nationals to come to work on the FOB and perform the very labor-intensive task of clearing out the garbage from the hangars. CPT Gallagher and his team have made much progress and we all look forward to the project's completion.

The battalion leadership continues to prepare for the arrival of our replacements from back at Ft. Lewis, 2-8 Field Artillery. All the staff members, while working diligently to keep our daily operations running smoothly, are also organizing continuity books to give to our counterparts from when they arrive. These continuity books will provide the 2-8 FA leadership valuable lessons we learned from our time here in Iraq. Over the last 9 months, we have learned and experienced so much and we look forward to sharing our stories with our brothers in arms.

Just this past week, the battalion received a banner from the Lacey School District telling us how much they appreciate all of our hard work and sacrifice while deployed to Iraq. The banner was 20 feet long and read, "Thank you to our soldiers in Iraq!" The banner was also signed by hundreds of students from Lacey. As a token of our friendship with the school, we sent the banner out on patrols with each of the batteries to take a picture with it. Alpha battery took a picture when the whole battery was at the Retrans site. Bravo brought the banner on the long drive to the ASP. Charlie took some great pictures up at the palace and HSB gathered everyone from the battery in front of our TOC for the group photo. The students and faculty at the Lacey School District really lifted our spirits and we thank them for all of their support.

The MWR facility here on the FOB continues to keep our morale high. The MWR staff coordinates a basketball league, volleyball league, soccer tournaments, softball tournaments, ping-

pong tournaments, and trivia contests. Bravo battery and HSB compete in the basketball league and Alpha battery has turned into a volleyball juggernaut. Excitingly, our own chaplain, CPT Ryu, ran away with the ping-pong tournament trophy. After the championship victory, he fittingly thanked God for his success. In addition to the weight room, basketball court, and Internet café, the MWR facility boasts a large-screen TV so we can all watch the Olympics.

As another update comes to a close, we all want to thank you for all that you do for us back home. Although our sunset is your sunrise, we feel your love all day, everyday. We'll keep our spirits high if you do the same. We'll be home soon! "On the Minute!"



LTC Steven Sliwa

296th Brigade Support Battalion

HHC OUTLAWS

We are now another month closer to redeployment; however the ever-changing mission for the Outlaws continue to do just that. Last month, members of 1-14's field feeding team (FFT) were sent south, but they have now returned.

We had several soldiers get promoted this month. PFCs Abeyta, Norton, Brouse, Collins and Hussein got promoted to SPC, while SPC Orozco made the big step to SGT. All have done an outstanding job and were well deserving of their promotion. We all work hard and we all work long days, but these soldiers still find the time for professional growth and development. I have never seen so many soldiers taking correspondence courses. Our soldiers strive to be the best they can be, day in and day out. Many soldiers will also get promoted next month. We have also had many soldiers reenlist and choose to stay part of the Outlaw family.

SGT Cobb has been selected as Hero of the Week for his hard work and dedication while performing his Force Protection and Mayor Cell duties. SGT Cobb's hard work and dedication was instrumental

in the successful operations as gate guard. His insight was key in making much needed improvements to gate operations. His ideas greatly improved security at the FOB. Week in and week out, SGT Cobb plays a pivotal role in improving the security and base operations, elevating the morale, health, and welfare of the fighting force.

The temperature has finally started to go down. We are now max-ing out at a cool 105-110 degrees. We are very thankful for air conditioners, electricians, and generator mechanics. Uniform modifications are allowed while in the guard towers or out on convoys, and cold water is available at virtually every turn. So, we have survived the Iraqi heat and are looking forward to the cold, wet weather of the Great Pacific Northwest.



remaining alert, but the soldiers are managing it well.

Soldiers are pulling guard duty almost daily and temperatures in the tower during the peak of the day are very high. The temperature and fatigue can be a significant hurdle to

We had to relocate the living quarters of many of our soldiers, as well as the Outlaw CP, in preparation for 1st Brigade's arrival. Soldiers don't seem to mind, because they know what the end result will be. Our job as leaders is to keep everyone sharp and focused. We are closer to coming home, but we still have a mission. We still have to remain focused. We still have to support the Arrowhead Brigade! Outlaws!

DC MAD DAWGS

The Mad Dawgs had a promotion ceremony this past weekend. We were able to promote two well-deserving soldiers. Darren Starling was promoted



to Staff Sergeant and Rebecca Pollock was promoted to Sergeant (SGT). Congratulations to both of them. Also during this time we passed out coins to all the soldiers in

the company who were with us during our rotations to NTC and JRTC. We just wanted to recognize all the sacrifices they made in the last couple of years.

It has been a long road and we are proud of everyone who has been along for the ride.

I am not sure how much of the Olympics everyone has been watching at home, but the Iraqi soccer team is doing quite well in their competition in Athens. All the workers on post are very excited. Last Thursday night the team beat Portugal and last night (Sunday) they defeated Costa Rica. This has to be good for the morale of the country. It makes the soldiers over here feel good about helping to get rid of Saddam's regime and seeing this team play uninhibited and free of fear. I think this is one non-US team that I will be rooting for throughout the Games. The Iraqis are considered long shots for any medal, but wouldn't it be great if they slipped in there and took one home to their new country?

Things back here in Mosul are flowing as smoothly as ever. In fact, things are going so well we felt confident enough to send our commander, CPT Joe Greenlee, home for some well-deserved leave. We are hoping he enjoys his time off as we hope all the Mad Dawgs who have had some leave enjoyed their stay at home. Soon enough we will all be home and able to enjoy time with our families.

FMC BLACKSMITHS

As the extreme hot temperatures of the summer slowly dwindle down, the soldiers of the Forward Maintenance Company can see cooler temperatures ahead and the long awaited arrival of the other Forward Maintenance Company from 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. There is great anticipation of being reunited with all of the families that have waited so patiently for their loved one's arrivals. Until then, the soldiers of the FMC continue to perform their duties with the same level of discipline and motivation that has been displayed since our first day in country. Our soldiers' morale continues to be extremely high.

I would like to give special thanks to all the Blacksmith soldiers; like SSG Clark and her husband, SGT Griffin (B/1-23 INF), who both re-enlisted for six years, SSG Sabado, SGT Dempsey, SGT Vargas, SGT Olsen, SGT Torres, SGT Armstrong, SGT O'Rourke, SGT Stuart, SPC Ramos, and SPC Perea and their families that have decided to continue their service to this great nation and have re-enlisted during this time of conflict to continue their careers in the Army. The Army is rewarding soldiers that choose to continue their service with generous tax-free bonuses.

Congratulations to the soldiers who have been selected for promotion during the past month. SGT O'Rourke was promoted to SSG. SPC Catlett, SPC Schmidt, SPC Stark, and SPC Munoz were all selected for SGT. PFC James was promoted to SPC. PV2 Martinez, PV2 McGill, PV2 Knapp, and PV2 Casares were all promoted to PFC. Further congratulations go out to all the soldiers that competed for advancement at the recently conducted Promotion Board.

During the past couple of weeks I went out and visited some of the Combat Repair Team (CRT) soldiers at the outlying FOBs. These soldiers are living and working amongst the Infantry and Cavalry units, making a lasting impression on how support from the FMC is conducted, and keeping those units ready for any mission.

All across the land you will find Blacksmith soldiers have been working very hard ensuring all the equipment remains combat ready and that the equipment is ready for the other Forward Maintenance Company to support its brigade with the same outstanding support that we were able to support the Arrowhead Brigade. The soldiers also man guard towers 24 hours of the day. In addition to the guard towers, Blacksmith Soldiers continue to man one of the main traffic gates to the FOB along with providing security escorts for logistical convoys throughout the Brigade area of operations.

We are very proud of SPC Gillespie, who was selected as the "Blacksmith and Frontline Player of the Week" for his heroic actions as a gunner during a LOGPAC that came under attack from Anti-Iraqi Forces. His actions allowed the entire convoy to safely return to the FOB without injury. SGT Hernandez was selected as the "Blacksmith player of the week" for his leadership in the Electronic Maintenance Section as well as on LOGPACs supporting the brigade. He has only been with the unit a short time, but his experience in this theater is great, since he was just recently in the area with the 1st Armored Division.

Once again, our thanks and appreciation go out to the families of the Blacksmith soldiers. We would like to welcome all the new soldiers and families to the Blacksmith Family. Your support truly makes a difference. God Bless.

276th Engineer Battalion

Hello to our Families and Friends. We have been watching the high temperatures on a daily basis and keeping our fingers crossed that we have seen the worst that northern Iraq has to offer. However, we still have several weeks left until we are in the clear. Another month is almost gone as we continue our tour here in Iraq. We continue to receive care packages from our Family Readiness Groups and letters of support from fellow Americans back in the states. It is quite humbling to read a letter of thanks and appreciation from a person that you have never met. Yet, without completely knowing, they show gratification for the sacrifice and dedication that each soldier here makes on a daily basis. Our Family Readiness Groups have been super throughout our entire deployment. Many times our Coordinators are placed into thankless positions, but yet, they continue the mission to communicate with our families and support our soldiers – THANK YOU!

Keep The Wheels Rolling **“Bravo Bears”**

The soldiers of Bravo Company, 276 Engineer Battalion have been performing combat missions in northern Iraq since early March. In the five months the bears have been in country, they have completed over 186 missions. These missions could not have been successful without the support of the Bravo Company maintenance section. The Bravo Company maintenance section is under the direction of SSG Asbury and consists of eight hard-working and well-trained mechanics.

The maintenance section is a part of the 276 ENG BN Headquarters Company. This section is much like the rest of the Battalion, in that it has been comprised of soldiers from all over the state of Virginia. Five soldiers are organic to Bravo Company, two are originally from the Headquarters Company and one is a transfer from the 3647th Maintenance Company out of Fort Pickett. The section is designed to staff fifteen soldiers, but it is extremely under manned, and only has eight personal assigned. Out of these eight mechanics, six are normally at the shop or on guard duty and two are on location, as a contact team wherever our company may go. The maintenance section has performed work in the shop, our forward operating base, and even in the middle of a convoy on the roads of Iraq. The contact team is designed to repair minor problems and even has limited welding capabilities. The team may be limited in tools and

equipment, but not in professionalism and dedication.

The maintenance section is set up to do unit level maintenance, but due to the high operational tempo and critical need of the equipment, this maintenance team has stepped it up and performed several tasks that normally would go to the direct support maintenance shop. The maintenance



section had to overcome and tackle some problems that have come with the environment. “Due to the extreme heat and sand, anything that is rubber or plastic has to be replaced more often than we expect back in the states,” said SGT Young.

When they entered Iraq the equipment they received had already seen a year of combat. The section went from having eleven pieces of equipment non-mission capable to just one at the present time. With over 100 pieces of equipment now assigned to Bravo Company, the mechanics have little room for error. Due to their extensive work, and dedication to service, the Bravo Bears can keep the wheels rolling.

“Don’t Feed The Bears”

18th Engineer Company

Hello friends and family of the 18th Engineers.

Things are going great here in Iraq. We’ve hit a high recently (123 degrees). It can be really draining when we are on missions in full gear with the hot diesel exhaust from the Stryker blowing in your face. The soldiers never complain though. They understand the importance of their mission and take pride in the fact that they are keeping the brigade safe.



We’ve had some transitions. LT Pera (2nd Platoon Leader) and LT Biggs (Mobility Support Platoon Leader) have switched jobs. They are both very

competent officers and will do a great job in their new units. We attached 1st platoon to 1-23 IN, the

Tomahawks, under the command of LTC James, a great leader. They are all doing well and will make the company proud of their accomplishments. And the best news of all is that we packed and cleared customs with our first container of equipment to send home. The light truly is at the end of the tunnel. Everyone is excited but still focused on the mission and staying safe.

CPT Kenneth Mitchell

A (TAB)/2-131st Field Artillery (MLRS)

Dear Family and friends,
These past two weeks have been pretty busy for the Battery. Following are some of the highlights. Last week I had the opportunity to promote two well deserving soldiers, PFC Xavier Aguirre was advanced to SPC and SPC Deric Garcia was promoted to SGT. We finally got free laundry! KBR opened up a drop off and pick up point at our living pad, this makes it a lot easier and it's cheaper for the soldiers to get their clothes cleaned. The radar section at Balad got a telephone hook up at their site. This will make it easier for them to make morale calls home. We had 6 soldiers take leave this month and I'm anticipating we will get 6 more the following month. SGT Alsup, SSG Piland, and 1SG Barrera received battalion coins from the battalion commander, LTC Sliwa for their hard work and efforts to the BN.

CPT Al Gomez

209th Military Intelligence Company

Hello again from Mosul! The past couple of weeks have been pretty busy for us as we continue to provide support for Brigade operations as well as prepare to receive our replacements. The news has been showing that the fighting around Najaf has flared up again and we've been working hard to make sure it doesn't spread to this part of the



country as well. It appears so far that we have been successful, as the city has remained relatively calm (except when the Iraqi soccer team wins, of course). We have been treated to an AK-47 tracer light show on those occasions and though

it can be alarming, it is an impressive sight. The Iraqis really support their team.

The temperature is slowly coming down. The highs are averaging around 110 degrees, but there has been a noticeable cooling trend. The lows are now in the mid 70's. Humidity has been a little higher lately, but not too noticeable. The wind has also picked up, making the weather slightly more pleasant. We won't start dropping below 100 degrees until September, but until then we'll take any relief we can get.

This past week has also seen a promotion board for soldiers in 3 BDE. The Mustangs had 2 NCOs and 1 soldier eligible for the board. Congratulations to SGT Ray, SPC Payne, and SGT McQuillan for passing the board. All three scored a 148 out of 150 possible points, which is a fantastic average and speaks a lot to the mentorship and preparation of these soldiers by the senior NCOs in the company.

The first range proved so popular that MICO decided to do a second one this week. Because of work schedules not all the soldiers who wanted or needed to attend the last range were



able to. When the soldiers came back talking about how much they enjoyed shooting, we decided a second range was called for. Soldiers often consider shooting

the most enjoyable training event and we were happy to oblige. Any time we can put on a training event that allows soldiers to enjoy themselves while receiving good training we try to take the opportunity to do so. Using the ranges is also a good excuse to allow our soldiers to spend time at the FOB where the PX and several local vendors are located, allowing soldiers to stock up on items they don't have regular access to.

The MWR here regularly sponsors events to help keep soldiers entertained and allow them to relieve stress. Unfortunately due to the workload many soldiers can't participate in as many events as they would like, but this week some Mustang soldiers were able to participate in a basketball tournament. The three-on-three tournament is one of the more popular and competitive events put on by MWR. With that in mind, congratulations are in order for SSG Vinoski, PFC Sharma, and SGT McQuillan for taking second place.

In closing, good things are still happening here for the Mustangs. Although we are getting close to the end of the tour, soldiers are still working

hard while taking advantage of the opportunities they have. We will continue to work towards making the deployment as enjoyable and rewarding for the soldiers as possible, even as we prepare to go home.

CPT Kevin Hosier

293rd Military Police Company

The 293rd MP Company has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II for almost 6 months now. The company continues to focus on Mosul's police force while still directly supporting the Stryker BDE. The mission hasn't changed much, but the MPs are staying focused and carrying out the mission successfully. Joint operations with the Iraqi Police have increased and the relationship between MPs and Iraqi Police continues to be a key factor in supporting the Iraqi government in Mosul.

The morale and welfare of the soldiers is staying high. The Mosul Airfield (MAF) MWR continues to provide all sorts of programs to keep the soldier's busy after duty hours. The 293rd has a basketball team that is competing in the MAF basketball league and is one of the top teams. Also, the company just finished an internal 3-on-3 basketball league and championship tournament. 1st platoon took the championship going undefeated the entire season and winning the tournament. 6 months to go and the 293rd's warriors are staying motivated, leading the way in everything they do.

CPT Jason Jajack

334th Signal Company

The past two weeks have proved to be busy and full of challenges. However, the soldiers of the 334th Signal Company continue to exceed the standard in



all endeavors. The company was able to send a few soldiers on mid-tour leave, giving them a chance to slow down awhile and "smell the roses" so to

speak, spending some well-deserved time with family and friends.

A majority of the company recently participated in mandatory redeployment briefings by the Brigade Chaplain. This is very encouraging news for all of us, but upcoming family reunions might also be accompanied by unexpected tension between you and your spouse after the long separation. I highly recommend that husbands and wives back at Ft. Lewis attend family reunion seminars on-post to learn to be better prepared for your spouses' homecoming.

The company has gained a new soldier: SPC Burch and his wife joined us from the 22nd Signal Brigade, Germany, where he had deployed to Iraq for 7 months last year. His wife is currently in the first trimester of pregnancy. We are glad to have you and look forward to meeting you soon.

Company morale is still high, and there are plenty of copies of newly released movies available to keep us occupied during downtime. A lot of soldiers are taking full advantage of on-line correspondence courses during the deployment, accumulating credit hours toward their promotion and degree completion.

I've undoubtedly failed to mention every significant achievement by individuals in this company, and I ask that you excuse any omissions. The soldiers of this company continue to perform remarkably well each day.

I am proud to serve this company, and I look forward to meeting all of the families again soon. I hope you and your little ones had a very enjoyable summer, as the beginning of the fall semester is just around the corner.

CPT Dave Kim

And finally...



The tower of a centuries old mosque in the town of Amadia in northern Iraq.

Thanks to everyone once again for your continued care and support. Knowing we have the support of the folks back home makes our job that much easier. In the coming months we will face many challenges – both in Iraq and at home. Please keep us in your thoughts. You are always in ours.

- Arrowhead

* You will notice a conspicuous non-use of spouse names in the newsletter. This is purposefully done to protect families.